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City of Berkeley
2180 Milvia Street, 5h Floor
Berkeley, CA 94704

Re: Proposed Location for Apothecarium Cannabis Retailer (Agenda Item 17)

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Council,

I write today to express the university's opposition to the proposal to establish a third cannabis dispensary in the Telegraph District within a block of the campus.

As you know, several members of my cabinet sent a letter to the Cannabis Commission expressing our shared concern about the negative impact that establishing this additional dispensary would have on our students and the community.

I would like to reiterate several of those concerns again here. From a public health as well as a student education and development perspective, campus officials are aware of the impact that the community environment and availability have on student social norms and individual decisions. This is well documented for both alcohol and marijuana.

Of particular concern is the impact of legalization on youth below age 25, because research suggests that use among youth carries special risks to the developing brain that are not present for older adults. Legalization should have as a primary goal establishing a legal market while at the same time instituting regulatory structures to prevent or mitigate harm, particularly to youth.

Cannabis, like alcohol and tobacco, is an addictive substance that should not be treated as an ordinary commodity in the marketplace. Our medical and mental health providers, prevention specialists, student development experts, and alcohol/drug counselors are strongly in favor of a harm reduction approach to all drugs, especially cannabis, and support the national movement to decriminalize cannabis in all its forms. However, the alternative to criminalization should not be unfettered and unmanaged availability and access. We support a managed approach to legal cannabis availability in Berkeley, to support the health and wellbeing of the campus community.

As you know, the Telegraph District and the Southside is home to a vast number of our students. Every day, our campus also hosts young people from preschool through high school for any number of activities such as attending musical performances, athletic events, public lectures and prospective student tours. It is our belief that the opening of more dispensaries near campus could introduce new products to students who may be particularly vulnerable to marketing and promotion due to their newly-achieved independence, academic stress and social pressures. We understand that similar concerns have been raised by community members and leaders who fear that this will also impact students who attend nearby public schools.

I understand and appreciate the City of Berkeley's efforts to ensure community members have access to the supports that are critical to their health and well-being. But, I ask you to consider the concentration of dispensaries in this area and their proximity to campus where tens of thousands of young adults below age 25 live, study and work.

With two dispensaries already operating in this neighborhood, it may be of greater benefit to city residents to assist Apothecarium with locating in a part of the city that does not have access to a dispensary.

Thank you for consideration of this letter of opposition. Please contact Ruben Lizardo, Director of Local Government and Community Relations with any questions.

Sincerely,



Carol T. Christ